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STUDY
PROJECT

THE MAGHREB: BUILDING UNITY

BY

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The Maghreb: Building Unity		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Study Project
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC Badis El Mekki		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Same		12. REPORT DATE 29 March 1990
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 31
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was born in Marrakech on February 17, 1989. It is composed of five countries--Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania. This union has been a dream of many generations of the peoples of North Africa. Because of the same past, language, religion and culture, and the same challenges, the Union of the Maghreb States is not only natural but also a necessity. It is <u>natural</u> since history and the geographic location have shaped this region into a distinct entity; <u>necessary</u> because only united can the countries of the Maghreb better defend their interests against the European		

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Along with the thoughts on the reality of the Maghreb, this paper provides some recommendations of how successfully to achieve integration and develop joint unified strategies.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

THE MAGHREB: BUILDING UNITY
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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March 1990

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Badis El Mekki, LTC, IF, Morocco

TITLE: The Maghreb: Building Unity

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DATE: March 1990 PAGES: 32 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was born in Marrakech on February 17, 1989. It is composed of five countries--Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania. This union has been a dream of many generations of the peoples of North Africa. Because of the same past, language, religion and culture, and the same challenges, the Union of the Maghreb States is not only natural but also a necessity. It is natural since history and the geographic location have shaped this region into a distinct entity; necessary because only united can the countries of the Maghreb better defend their interests against the European Economic Community and strengthen their position and their role in the international arena, mainly within the rest of the Arab world. Moreover, the Maghreb union can contribute to promoting and safeguarding peace and security, as well as ideals of freedom and justice around the Mediterranean region.

Along with the thoughts on the reality of the Maghreb, this paper provides some recommendations of how successfully to achieve integration and develop joint unified strategies. (D)

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THE MAGHREB BUILDING UNITY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The union of Northwest African countries is more than a dream; it is more than a geographical and historical reality; it is a state of mind of all its peoples today, its past ruling dynasties and even to many invaders that had been once masters of the region for many centuries. For the Berbers, North Africa was the homeland. Under the Romans, it was the Great Province and the granary of the Roman Empire. The Arabs called it Djaziret El Maghreb, the Island of the Sunset, because of its western geographic location. The French colonials contributed their culture to its "collective distinctiveness which is not shared by many groups of nations that can be called to mind."¹

The national independence movements of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia met in Tangiers in 1954 and decided not only to unite their struggle for independence, but also to achieve the natural union of their countries. Morocco and Tunisia, the first to be independent, continued to provide safe bases and all the support to the National Liberation Front (NFL) troops in Algeria. Moreover, the Moroccan National Liberation Army (ALN) was reluctant to stop the armed struggle against the French until the whole Maghreb was freed and independent. Years have passed since independence, with the three countries living under strange and even very strained relations. Finally, on February 17, 1989, in Marrakech,

joined by Libya and Mauritania, they decided to unite themselves under the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

The Maghreb states, which are already united by geography, have a common heritage of history and peoples, the same culture and language, and above all, they share today the same challenges. It is essential to examine these binding factors to better understand that the AMU is more than natural and necessary. The last part of this paper will be on how to lay down the foundations and construct solidly the structures of this union. This paper will deal only with Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia which the author considers to be the pillars of the Maghreb. Historically, Libya and Mauritania had little, if any, contribution at all to the well-being of the Maghreb. They were rather transit territories, respectively, with the Middle-East and Black Africa.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles F. Callagher, North African Problems and Prospects, Part I, p. 1.

CHAPTER II

THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THE MAGHREB

The Maghreb El Arabi, or the Arab West, is the western wing of the Arab world. Today it consists of the five countries of Northeast Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. The geographic distinctive location and the features of this region are apparent from the first glance at the map. Separated from Europe by the seven-mile Strait of Gibraltar, surrounded by two seas, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, it well deserves the Arabic name, Djaziret al Maghreb, the Island of the Sunset.

The Maghreb is an area where both Southern European and Northern Black African features meet, a blending of their land, climate, vegetation, people and history. This very unique position is very well depicted by a metaphor used by King Hassan of Morocco, comparing the Maghreb to a tree with roots living in the African soil and leaves breathing in Europe. Ronald Steel also made the following observation:

Through its long and complex history, North Africa has been unavoidable and undefinable. Unavoidable, because it lies at the crossroads of the two civilisations: the Western civilisation of Europe, and the African civilisation of the peoples who live south of the Sahara. North Africa is also indefinable, because it is neither African nor European, but a mixture of both, with a heavy dose of the Middle East thrown in for good measure. . . . But if Africa means more than simply a place on the map, they are not African any more than Australia is Asian. Rather they are something unique unto themselves: a curious fusion of peoples and civilisations.¹

This excellent observation shows how much common and identical, unique and distinct this region is. Both its location and history have given it the special traits it has today.

ENDNOTES

1. Ronald Steel, North Africa, Preface, p. 3.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY AND THE PEOPLES OF THE MAGHREB

History is the soul of nations from which they draw their identity and their very existence. There is no nation without history. History, as a source of pride, motivation and a factor of unity, helps to envision common ideals and goals. The Maghribis ought to "read and meditate about (their) history," to borrow Napoleon's words. To better know their past would mean for them to better assess themselves and better shape the course, the life and the destiny of their peoples.

My intention is not to narrate the history of North Africa as such, but rather to explore the historical background that demonstrates that the countries of Northwest Africa have the same past and are descended from the same people.

From Libya to Morocco, along both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coasts, travelers can admire the magnificent ruins of Cyrene, Carthage, Timgad and Volubilis, the ruins of the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans, respectively, in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. It is noteworthy to mention that later on, under the Berber Almohad dynasty and through Andalousia of Spain, great thinkers and philosophers such as Socrates were translated and their ideas transmitted to Europe. The Phoenicians settled along the coast and developed very prosperous cities and outposts. Their famous capital, Carthage, kept its strategic trading importance even under the Romans. As far as the Romans

were concerned, they certainly were the first under which North Africa experienced its first unity.¹ The Romans brought and extended their agrarian and social civilization to the region.

However, neither Romans, Phoenicians, nor Greeks left a durable influence. Only crumbling ruins mark their passage. On the other hand, the Berbers, the Arabs and the French have shaped deeply the history of the Maghreb and continue to have a profound imprint on the whole Maghreb and its peoples.

Amazingly, the Berbers, the native inhabitants of the Maghreb, resisted all the invasions and have preserved their dialects and their subculture until now. Although the Berbers, under the Romans, adopted agrarian and agricultural techniques with great vitality and dynamism, they did not intermarry with the Romans. Neither did they mix with the Greeks and the Phoenicians as they did later on with the Arabs. Indeed, their - - - became totally linked with the Arabs after they conquered Northwest Africa. Berbers and Arabs mixed together with remarkable speed and to such an extent that "the word Berber can have today a sense only in linguistics where it is used to identify the Berber speaking people."² There are the two peoples that have given to the Maghribis that distinctiveness of being from an Arabo-Berber racial stock.

At first, the Berbers posed a strong resistance to the Arab conquest of their land. This was illustrated by Kahina, the legendary Berber queen who continued to defy the Arab armies for many years in the Algerian Aures mountains.³ Once the Berbers embraced Islam and adopted the Arab culture, they socially began

to mix with the Arabs. It has even become a tradition for the kings of Morocco from Arabic descent to marry Berber women. Idriss I, the founder of the first Arab dynasty in Morocco, the Idrissides, married Kenza, a Berber woman. This tradition is carried on even today by King Hassan II, whose wife is from the once fearsome Berber tribe of Zayan.

The past hostility of the Berbers to the Arabs should be understood in terms of the social and economic grievances any people have toward a central government. A good example was given by Samir Amin when he mentioned the Berber Kharijite sect: "The Kharijite heresy, an ascetic and egalitarian creed, was an expression of opposition to the taxation imposed by the urban Arab bureaucracy, whose luxury and magnificence scandalized the peasantry."⁴ And this Kharijite kingdom had its strongholds all over the Maghreb.

In fact, Berbers helped the Arabs to defend Islam and supplied most of the troops that accompanied Tarik Ibn Zyad, himself a Berber, when he led the expedition which began the Moslim conquest of Spain in 711. In the name of Islam, Arab culture and ideology, the Berber Almohad dynasty established an Arabo-Berber empire from Spain to Tunisia, down to the river banks of Senegal.

Thus, the Berbers have never regarded Arabism as a hostile force but rather as a cultural force to which they felt very attracted, without losing sight of their original identity. The French failed to understand this fact when they tried to divide and dissociate Berbers from Arabs.

The issuance of the Berber dahir (decree), which allowed the Berber communities to remain under their customary laws, instead of the Islamic, was only the most notorious (and disastrous) consequence of the French belief that the Arab-berber differences were so great as to permit a real divide policy. . . . The division was not so sharp as the French thought to be.

Even for the purpose of this paper, it is difficult to have special paragraphs on Arabs dissociating them from the Berbers.

The Arabs invaded North Africa in the 7th century. They first settled in Tunisia, from where they expanded and extended their influence to the whole Maghreb. In spite of the resistance I previously mentioned, they were accepted by the Berbers, who were certainly weary of the destructive vandal occupation. The Arabs' rapid mixture with the Berbers never stopped and was neither broken by the Turkish occupation of Algeria and Tunisia,⁶ nor was it broken when the entire Maghreb was a part of the French empire.

In the 15th century, after the Christian reconquista of Spain and the total withdrawal of Moslems from Andalousia, the Europeans began their expansion and their settlement of North African coasts. At the beginning of the 20th century, with the exception of some Spanish enclaves, the French consolidated their hold on the entire Maghreb.⁷ The influence the French had on this area increased tremendously the distinctiveness of this area with respect to the rest of the Arab world.

Although the timing and the status of the colonization of Algeria on one hand and Morocco and Tunisia on the other, were different, the methods and policies applied by the French were

broadly identical in the three countries. In each country the French had the same direct-control form of government and the same policy of cultural assimilation of the natives. Thus, following their independence, the countries resembled one another in structure and organization and had fundamentally the same economic and social problems.

It is noteworthy to underline, however, that the French colonial period triggered and created differences that were to shape and condition the post-independence era. Algeria had been colonized for more than a century and had been considered a metropolitan territory of France. The French cultural assimilation of Algerians was deep, and the old aristocracy almost disappeared.

Whereas in Morocco, and to some extent Tunisia, which were only protectorates, the traditional social structures were kept alive, and the two countries were ruled by the French President General, in the name of the Sultan or the Bey.⁸

So far, I have given an overview of the history of Northwest Africa, but if I had to highlight one characteristic of its history and its peoples, it would be that the Maghribis are of an Arabo-Berber race with a profound French imprint. In contrast with the Phoenicians and the Romans and even the French, the Arabs exerted influence all over the area. They intermarried extensively with the Berbers. The harmony found between the Arabs and the Berbers did not destroy the Berber culture, which is still strong today, nor was it an obstacle to harmoniously assimilating the French culture. This last point leads to another commonality of the Maghribis: a typical common culture and language.

ENDNOTES

1. North Africa was, however, administered in four separate provinces - Mauritania Tingitan ----- Morocco today
- Mauritania Caesarius ----- West Algeria
- Numidia ----- East Algeria
- Africa ----- Tunisia
2. E. Doutte, Bulletin du Comite' de l'Afrique francaise, No. 8, p. 166.
3. Samir Amin, The Maghreb in the Modern World, p. 91.
4. Amin, p. 93.
5. Richard B. Parker, North Africa - Regional Tensions and Regional Concerns, p. 9.
6. The Turks could not penetrate Morocco.
7. Libya was to be occupied by Italians.
8. The Sultan and the Bey are names respectively given to kings in Morocco and Tunisia.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMMON CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

In the modern world people are often known for their words as much as for their deeds. So it is with the Arabs who base their identity in large measure upon the use of a common tongue. Equally true for the French is the belief that the language will play a predominant role, in the cultural orientation of the man or a nation.

In this respect, the Maghreb identity is clearly defined since the Maghribis speak the classical Arabic as well as similar nonwritten Maghribi local Arabic.

The constitutions of the Maghribi countries state that classical Arabic is the official national language. But whether it is the spoken or the written form, Arabic goes side by side with French. Most of all, the educated people are perfect bilinguals. Bilingualism has become a necessity. The study of Arabic is a way to preserve identity, to strengthen the dignity of the people, and to know better the religion of Islam. The study of French gives a sense of power and social promotion. It has also the advantage of being open to other cultures and to technical and scientific fields. All the three countries have introduced a functional bilingualism in their educational systems. "The language is ultimately more than mere communication. . . . The language is the verbalization of the shared beliefs, fraternal bonds, communal historical ties, and the joint expectations of the people."² No such statement could be more true than it is for the Maghreb countries. Classical Arabic, Maghribi local Arabic and

French are . . . expressions of their deep historical and cultural bonds with both the Middle-Eastern Arabs and the French civilization. Moreover, Arabic is the language of Islam which ties them to the broader Islamic world.

Speaking about Islam, "the North Africans are by and large stolidly religious in their conservative Maliki Islam, and they hold the spiritual of Moslem-Arab culture in the Middle East in high regard."³ There is conservatism but not fanaticism of religion in North Africa. Islam is not only a practical way of life but a strong belief that goes back deep into history. Having been a crossroads of many civilizations and many cultures, the Maghribi society is potentially open-ended and extremely tolerant society. Generally, North Africans are very proud of their open Mediterranean culture which draws on Carthage, Rome, Arabs and Europeans.

To give a historical example, Carthage was a great open cultural center, rivalling imperial Rome. Tunisian merchants traded throughout Africa, Southern Europe and Middle East, stopping from Spain to Phoenicia (Lebanon), and bringing rare goods and ideas back to the North Africans.

This cultural openness and tolerance have built into the Maghribis two other remarkable qualities, moderation and realism. The best example is the Maghribi stand on the Israeli-Arab issue. Bourguiba, the former President of Tunisia, proposed in 1965:

A new approach recognizing Israel and calling for negotiations intended not as capitulation but as a way to force the opposite party to the conference table and win major concessions by it, he pointed out that

intransigence of the Arabs in rejecting all discussions with Israel gave it a considerable propaganda advantage by allowing it to portray itself as eager for a reasonable settlement which its opponents refused to consider.⁴

While touring some of the Middle-Eastern countries, Bourguiba said boldly, "You can continue to drug the masses with provocative slogans and unfulfilled promises, but at the rate things have been going for the last seventeen years, the Arabs have not made an inch of a leadways."⁵

King Hassan II of Morocco, for his part, met many times with Jewish and Israeli leaders to explore ways of a constructive dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. He met with the former Israeli premier, Peres, and he is said to be behind the 1978 Sadat trip to Jerusalem.

Thus, these characteristics of the Maghribis are a part of their common heritage they drew from their history. These characteristics are also strong arguments for the union of the Maghreb.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles F. Callagher, North African Problems and Prospects, Part III, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 18.
3. Charles F. Callager, The Maghreb and the Middle-East, p. 4.
4. Ibid., p. 7.
5. Ronald Steel, North Africa, Vol. 38, Nbre 5, p. 106.

CHAPTER V

THE COMMON CHALLENGES

For the more than 30 years following their independence, the Maghreb countries have followed separate ways of development, almost disregarding one another, in spite of many agreements of unification never put into execution. Today, they face the same challenges, but they can no longer afford to deal with them separately. The development of their region, relations with the European Economic Community (EEC) and their international role, particularly within their Arab World, are among many critical issues for which unified strategies are necessary.

The Development of the Maghreb

Economic and industrial development is the most acute challenge. Unified efforts are needed to overcome existing difficulties and to carry on more ambitious projects for the benefit of the whole region. Nature has been kind with North Africa and has provided many resources which would tremendously accelerate joint economic development.

Economic Overview

Due to its location at a trade crossroads, the Maghreb could be a platform for international commerce. It is open and accessible to the outside world. Its geographic location places it in close proximity to the sizeable and promising markets of Europe, the Middle-East and Africa.

Key Economic Sectors

In overall economic activities, agriculture remains the main sector. It employs more than 50 percent of the labor force and receives the majority of government investment. It produces a variety of vegetables and fruits, cereals and many food crops out of season in Europe. With common substantial investment, the Maghreb could be more than self-sufficient; it could export more of its agricultural products.

Minerals

The Grand Maghreb has oil, natural gas, phosphate, cobalt, iron and many other minerals in considerable quantities. But they are unequally distributed among the three countries. For example, Algeria has oil and gas, whereas Morocco has no oil but has 70 percent of the world's phosphate reserves. Thus, much money could be saved by each country if it could share in the others' resources.

Industry

Due to its energy resources, only Algeria has ambitious industrial projects. The other two countries opted for light industries which required less investment and which went harmoniously with agricultural products.

Fish

It is worth mentioning the very important fishing sector. Of the three countries, Morocco has a very flourishing fishing industry. The Moroccan coast is very rich in sea life and Morocco

is the premier exporter of sardines. This sector would be more promising if there were joint investments in shipping and fishing companies by the Maghribi countries.

Tourism

Tourism is a tremendous source of revenue which would be even more profitable if the Maghribis knew how to better develop the region as a tourist haven. The region is very rich in history, culture, beauty and conveniences. It has impressive breathtaking coastal, desert and mountain scenery. It is the closest exotic place for both Europeans and Eastern Arabs. You can ski and swim within an hour, or you can enjoy watching the beautiful dunes or the quietness of the desert. This is a sector where a lot can be done with tourism.

As I have just mentioned, there are many capabilities offered to the Maghreb, but unfortunately, the countries have inward-looking systems. Looking at their economic systems, the following observations are striking:

- National planning is parallel and not coordinated among them.
- The economic systems are competing with each other, having too much duplication of industries.
- There is insignificant intra-Maghreb trade, it is rather oriented (for all three) toward Europe.

Amazingly, between the states of the Maghreb there were many cooperative agreements never respected, and many agencies created but never put into action. In 1964, there was a serious attempt

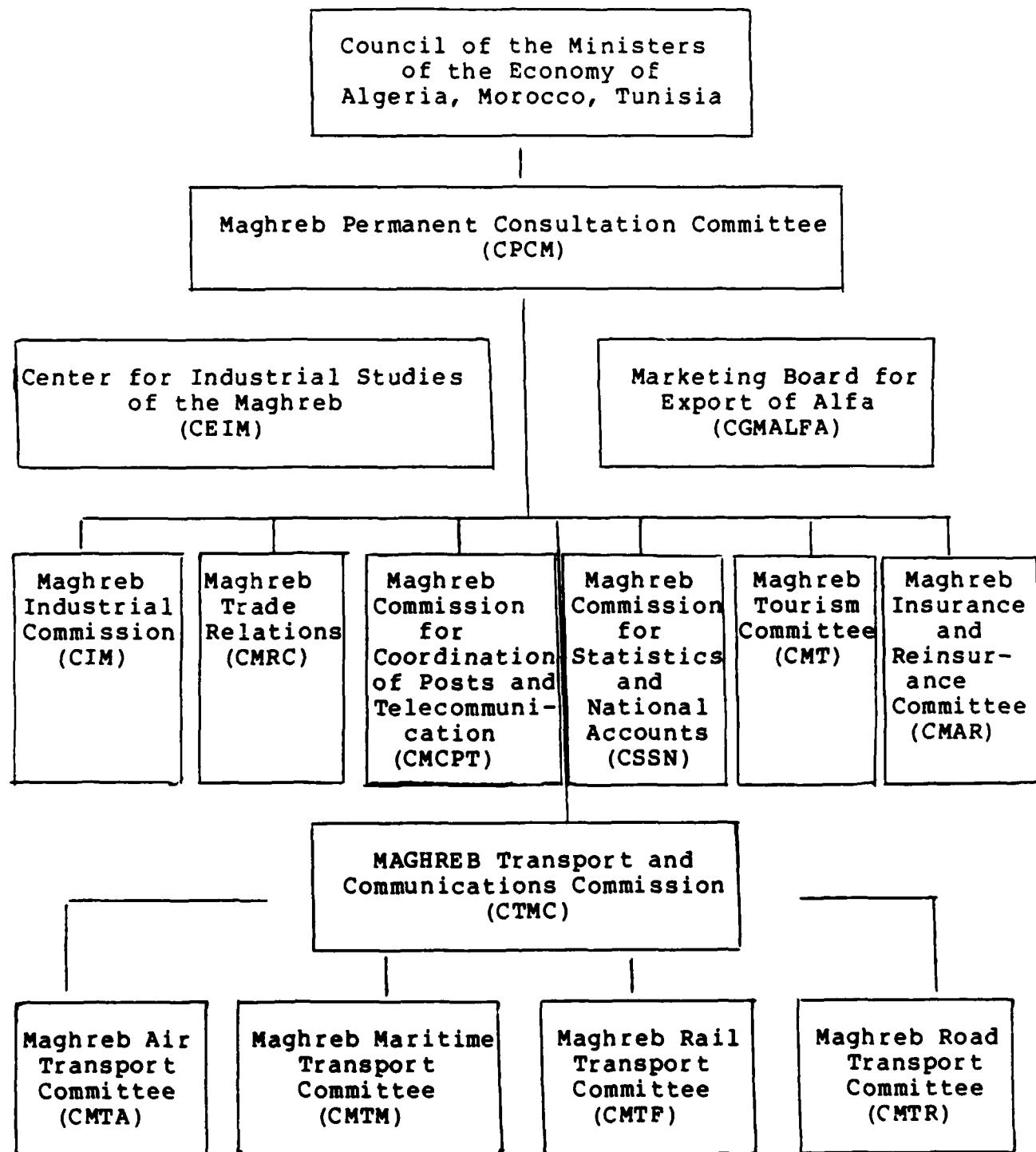
at cooperation and unification. The states established the institutional structure shown on page 18, which would work toward the establishment of an economic union and towards joint negotiations with world bodies and organizations. A permanent Consultative Committee was created directly under the Council of the Ministers of Economy. This committee was given the task of:

- Coordinating national development plans;
 - Promoting cooperation in the field of energy;
 - Establishing preferential trade between the three countries; and,
 - Developing a common approach towards trade with EEC.
- Three other committees were established to work with the Maghreb Permanent Consultation Committee (CPCM) and were assigned these no less important missions.

- Drawing a profile of the economies of the three countries;
- Coordinating the export of agriculture products; and,
- Coordinating the export of industrial products.

Had the Maghreb countries empowered these agencies to be effective, had they been committed to their agreements, their development would have been less challenging. Moreover, they would have gone far towards economic unity, an economic unity which would mean today a common market, free inter-Maghribi trade, ambitious investment and a strong bargaining unit with EEC.

MAGHREB ORGANIZATION FRAMEWORK



Sources: Abderrachman Robana, The Prospects of Economic Community in North Africa, 1973, p. 9.

THE MAGHREB AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

More than 70 percent of Maghreb's trade is with the European community. The total integration of the West European countries will have a deep impact on the Maghreb. The enlargement of the community to include Spain and Portugal, serious competitors for the Maghreb in agricultural products, has already created problems for the exports and trade between the Maghreb and Europe. The future relations ought to be placed in completely new perspectives.

The question today is no longer that "There is little, if any, coherence among the various agreements and treaties, which were negotiated at different times, under different circumstances and with different objectives."¹ Rather, the past individual relations with Europe will no longer be tolerable. The Maghreb countries can no longer afford to deal with Europe separately and compete with each other. Europe, for its part, will be no longer in a position to continue to play its game. To face this challenge, there is no other way but the integration of the Maghreb, for the mutual benefit for both North Africa and Europe.

Regrettably, in the past Algeria was less interested in the union of the Maghreb. Economically, it had less reason to be concerned about selling its oil and gas to Europe, and consequently it felt favored to develop its own industry, with the ultimate goal of Algerian hegemony in the region. In response, Morocco and Tunisia had formed a sporadic two-front strategic

alliance against Algeria at the cost of many concessions to the EEC (for example, favorable prices for their agricultural and manufactured products).

Obviously, this was a very short-sighted vision of the future. Today Algeria seeks outlets for her industrial products. First, the European market is very limited and not really in need of what Algeria might have to offer, iron and steel for example. Second, markets in which Algeria would be interested are already dominated by the well-established and highly competitive industrialized nations. Consequently, Algeria has been forced to look back to the Maghreb and to seek the integration which it had always rejected. Within the Grand Maghreb, Algeria could support a regional industrial market in which Morocco and Tunisia could contribute with their developed light industries and agriculture for a common benefit. Not only would the three countries be in a strong position to bargain with Europe, but also they would become a credible influential partner to Europe. They could obtain from Europe more favorable concessions in economic, financial and technical terms.

The Maghreb Union would represent a stable potential market for Europe. It would be a factor of peace and prosperity for the Mediterranean region, the Middle-East and Africa. Europe has vital interests in having free access to Arab oil, in securing its trade with the region, and in maintaining its past historic and cultural influence. Thus, I believe it is a challenge and a responsibility of both the Maghribis and the Europeans to build a strong Maghreb.

The region is very strategically located. In it converge the influences of three worlds: the African, as the Maghreb belongs to the Dark Continent; the Arab because of the religious and cultural traditions of its peoples; and the Europeans because of the deep economic, political influences and dependences created over the colonial period.²

Another very strong argument for the union of the Maghreb and the close cooperation with Europe is the presence of the two superpowers in the Mediterranean. A strong regional union can effectively coordinate policy with Europe and be in a strong position to defend and bargain with the two superpowers on all matters concerning security. A united Maghreb would not only strengthen Europe and more broadly the West, even the U.S. would be very interested in a pro-Western, strong Maghribi entity. Finally, the Maghreb would gain much more weight in its role in the international and particularly in the Arab world.

THE MAGHREB AND THE MIDDLE-EAST

The Maghribis feel themselves a part of the Arab world. Although they are far removed from the Arab Middle East, they have always viewed this part of their world as a religious and a cultural center of attraction. Moving from a passive to a very active role during the last decade, the Maghreb has become the land of meetings, Islamic conferences and Arab summits. In a word, it has become a land of dialogue. It is the home of the Arab league which has its headquarters in Tunis, and it is the temporary headquarters of the PLO. Moreover, it is in Algiers that on November 15, 1988, the Palestinians announced the creation

of the Palestine State. Moreover, the first Arab proposals to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict ever taken by consensus of the Arab leaders occurred on Maghribi land (the Fes Summit of 1982).

No doubt, the Maghreb has played an intensive political role during past years. It is natural that it should. Two-thirds of the Arabic territories are in North Africa, and two-thirds of the Arabic population are North Africans (including Egypt). In ten years Maghribis will be a hundred million people. Given these facts, one could imagine how dynamic a force would be created in the Arab world if a union were forged among the countries of the Maghreb, and how much confidence and strength it would mean when it comes to defend the Arab cause.

Characterized by a dual cultural outlook because of its unique and distinctive historic background, the Grand Maghreb would introduce more rationality and more pragmatism into Arab political thinking and behavior. Given their historical cultural heritage, the Maghribis are in a position to provide a good example to the Arab world.

As Arabs, the Maghribis share the agony of repeated Arab defeats in recent history. At the same time, Maghribis are angered by the Arab causes of these defeats.

For the most part these feelings are internalized but in time of crisis they break forth with overt expressions of indignation, shame, and irritation at the conduct and attitude of Middle-Eastern leaders and peoples.

North Africa made vital contributions to Arab history. First, they provided a model in the Algerian Revolution of victory

through persistence in the face of the French colonial soldier. Second, the example of courage was set by the North African conquest of Spain. After Tarik Ibn Zyad, a Berber Maghribi chieftain, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with his troops, he burnt all the boats, and is said to have cried to his troops, "The enemy is in front of you, the sea is behind you, you have nothing but to fight for your survival."

Since uniting the whole Arab world is a Utopian dream, the Arab Maghreb Union, together with the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Cooperation Council, would greatly strengthen the Arab league. Likewise, the Maghreb would have a stronger voice in all world organizations to which it belongs such as the United Nations and the organization of nonaligned countries.

I believe, that in their international role, the countries of Northwest Africa are compelled to form a union if they want their voice to be heard.

ENDNOTES

1. Curt Castegger, "The Mediterranean Europe and the Maghreb," The Atlantic Paper 1, p. 12.
2. Agostine Lamanna, "Europe Face to Face With the Maghreb," The Atlantic Paper 1, p. 72.
3. Charles F. Callager, The Maghreb and the Middle East, p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

THE REMODELING OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

So far I have written on the necessity for the Maghreb states to form a union because of the historical background and the different challenges they are facing. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how it ought to be done. I used the word remodeling in the title because I believe that a totally different way of thinking about the future of the Maghreb is needed.

It is very important to realize that the national liberation movements carried out the struggle to free the countries from the French with the intention of merging after independence. Immediately following the days of independence, there was a great deal of enthusiasm and goodwill. Great decisions were taken for unity. However, time passed and these decisions were never executed. Something went wrong. The Maghribi leaders began to talk about stabilization and industrial development before unity. It is unfortunate that unity did not have priority in those early days. Now that individual institutions and structures are built, it is very hard to create ~~united~~ inter-Maghrebi institutions, and it will be harder to do so as time passes.

THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

Not only are the institutions of the countries of the Maghreb structured differently, but they are framed within an opposed

ideology. The reason is to be found in the colonial past of each country.

Algerians had a long and bloody anti-French colonial past and were more sensitive to their nation-building. Algeria was considered a French territory, and Algerians were French citizens. This meant that after independence Algeria had to rebuild its identity and get back its personality, which it held the French responsible for trying to destroy. Algeria adopted, then, an ideologically hard line against any form of colonialism and oppression. Algerians supported and had sympathy for many revolutionary movements and the so-called progressionist socialist countries in the world. Politically they identified themselves with the Eastern Bloc and the Arab hardliners such as Syria, Libya and Iraq. For development, while paradoxically keeping good economic relations with France, they turned to the communists for equipment and assistance. Institutionally they had a single-party system. Economically, they had a centralized planned economy. Socially they had no aristocracy: it was killed both by their revolution and the long French colonial rule. All these elements combined to cast a shadow over Algeria's relations with her Arab neighbors.

Morocco and Tunisia were only protectorates during French colonial rule. So their ancient traditional social structures were kept alive. While Morocco had a constitutional monarchy and multi-party system, Tunisia had a president with a one-party system and a very liberal society. In the past, both Morocco and Tunisia had always looked at Algeria with the suspicion that it was seeking to export its socialist revolution. As opposed to Algeria,

they advocated moderation and had close relations with the U.S., the Western European nations and the moderate Arab countries in the Middle-East.

Unfortunately, differences over borders and the Sahara problems had been occurring since independence, a serious obstacle against Maghribi integration. Therefore, the first step in building the Maghreb unity must be to build trust and confidence by political measures. The states must settle their disputes and make concessions and sacrifices for the sake of the Union. This will be a good test for their political will.

Great changes are taking place very rapidly in the world today. Likewise, the Maghreb is changing. There has been a resumption of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Algeria. Moreover, there was the birth of the Arab Maghreb Union in 1988 (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia were joined by Libya and Mauritania). The more optimistic event was certainly the changing of the Algerian political and economic system. Two years ago, Algeria introduced and institutionalized a multiparty system and began the privatization of their economy.

It would be, however, unrealistic and unwise for Maghribi integration to begin with uniting political institutions first. Europe ought to be a good example. The Maghribi states ought to build first a community of economic interests. And the following steps would provide solid bases for better progress towards the union.

- Revitalize and empower the existent inter-Maghreb agencies (and other ones to be created if necessary).

- Develop unified and harmonious short-term and long-term development strategies.

WHAT SHOULD BE REVITALIZED?

- The CPCM (Maghreb Permanent Consultative Committee).

Created in 1964, this agency, as I already mentioned, is an excellent tool for economic and cooperation planning.

- The CEIM¹ (Center for Industrial Studies of the Maghreb).

It is a specialized agency for industrial studies which was created to work under the CPCM and within the Maghreb framework.

- The MIB² (Maghreb Integration Bank). Abderrahman Robana suggested the creation of the Maghreb Integration Bank. This bank is essential to reinforce the CEIM as far as the support and the study of financial requirements, markets, costs, etc. This bank could help "implement cooperative agreements and facilitate the adaptation of national enterprises to changes brought about by the integration process."³ I will be giving more details on the many advantages this financial institution could provide on a long-term strategy.

WHAT OUGHT TO BE DONE IN THE SHORT-TERM?

- At this time of their development, it is essential to establish a listing of what has been accomplished and of the capabilities of each country. This step is essential to better know how to lay the next foundation for the union.

- Harmonization of national plans, focusing on complimentary or joint economic, industrial and social projects.

- With the first step, the countries would be already able to start eliminating duplication and costly projects. This would lead to a specialization in production.
- Development of production standards is absolutely necessary to permit a smooth intra-Maghribi exchange and cooperation.
- Undertaking common investments on economic and industrial projects.
- Finally, developing a unified Maghreb-EEC policy.

These short-term objectives would bring trust and Maghreb consciousness. In addition, however, the leaders of the Maghreb ought to envision the far-reaching objective of unified institutions. This objective is very well defined by Abderrahman Robana:

The basic objectives in the long run should be the acceleration of balanced economic development among the Maghreb countries--the achievements of such a balance would necessitate the creation of permanent institutions to implement cooperative agreements and facilitate the adaptation of national enterprises⁴ to changes brought about by the integration process.

In other words, the objective would be to have every part of the region equally developed. In order to reach this objective, a long-term investment and financial system should be instituted to correct whatever imbalance might exist between the different parts of the Maghreb. It is for this purpose that it is essential to create the Maghreb Integration Bank I mentioned earlier. The MIB could carry on the following tasks:

- to facilitate trade;
- to control regional development;
- to develop and finance common projects;

- to regulate any Maghreb cooperation mechanism; and,
- to create and control a common currency.

Many other missions essential for integration could be assigned to the MIB. It is equally important to encourage and favor the creation of multinational enterprises which would cement and accelerate the integration. These enterprises with their self-interests would erase the frontiers, would settle anywhere in the Maghreb, creating and contributing to the development of a Maghribi spirit. In the same vein, many symbols could be created such as a Maghreb airline company or trans-Maghribi highways and railroads.

These are my thoughts on how to build and envision the future of the Arab Maghreb Union, which could have solid foundations through a better understanding of the post-independence era. This is a necessary step to get rid of the past mistakes and differences and learn how to develop common goals and objectives.

ENDNOTES

1. CEIM and CPCM. French acronyms:
Centre d' etudes industrielles du Maghreb.
Comite permanent consultatif Maghrebin.
2. Abderrahman Robana. The Prospects for an Economic Community in North Africa, p. 20.
3. Ibid., p. 122.
4. Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It has taken more than thirty years to build the European community; it will take less time to construct the Grand Maghreb. The historical heritage, the cultural, religious and linguistic bonds, the common problematic challenges, and the new international environment come together to make the unity of the Maghreb states more than an urgent necessity but a natural historic destiny.

Not to mention the dream it has represented for many years, the Arab Maghreb Union would respond to the vital interests of the peoples of this region. Economically, it could become strong, credible and influential in bargaining with Europe. It could bring prosperity and progress as well, by creating a promising internal market. Politically, as a strong unified regional body, it could be in good position to cooperate effectively with the U.S. and the Western European nations on matters of security in both the Mediterranean and the Middle-East. The Maghreb, less passionate and with its dual outlook inherited from his history, could promote dialogue and peace in the Middle-East.

Nevertheless, a careful appraisal of the post-independence era and a great deal of commitment, concessions and sacrifice, are essentially needed to better conceive and develop unified strategies towards a full integration.

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